XIX

The Widow of Nain.

BEING THE

SUBSTANCE

OF A

DISCOURSE

Delivered in ****,

In the YEAR 1755.

By *JOHN CENNICK.*

His Compaſſions fail not, LAM. iii. 22.
His Mercy endureth for ever, PSALM cvi. 1.

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Weep not, LUKE vii. 13.

IN the Days of our Saviour's Fleſh, as he was fulfilling his Courſe, and walking about doing good, it is obſerved, that he not only preached in the Synagogue, or in the Temple, or where great Multitudes reſorted, but often times ſeemed to go long Journies only to ſpeak with few, or with ſingle Perſons, or to heal one ſick, or to help a Sinner ready to periſh. He muſt needs go through *Samaria*, to ſave an Adultereſs, and few out of the City of *Sychar*; he would go into *Jericho* to ſave *Zacheus*, and be fatigued in a Throng another Time, that one poor Woman might touch the Hem of his Garment; and on another Day go to the Pool of *Bethesda*, to heal one lame Man; travel along the Road to help a Blind Beggar or two; and go into *Simon*'s Houſe to give a wretched Woman the Opportunity to ſit at his Feet, and hear of and receive his free Forgiveneis. All this ſerves to ſhew how the Lord is of tender Pity, and deſpiſes not the leaſt Soul he made. This ſhould teach his Miniſters not to ſpare any Pains or Labour, though it ſhould be to toil and ſpend themſelves in Journies, by Land or Sea, if only one ſingle Soul is thereby won to the Kingdom of God. It ſhould alſo teach every Sinner, that though he may think little whether he be ſaved or not, and though he may un-

dervalue his own Soul; the Lord had not thought ſo, but ſpared no Pains to redeem and make that neglected Soul happy. Should a guilty and ſelf-condemned Man, or Woman, or little Child think, I am unworthy the Lord's Notice, I am but as a Piece of vile Duſt or Aſhes, and may juſtly be paſſed over, unheeded by him that made me: He may learn from all theſe Inſtances, and from all our Saviour's Behaviour in the Goſpel, that our very Hairs are numbered, and the leaſt and [moſt] worthleſs Heart is not rejected by him, or caſt off, or forſaken becauſe of his being good for Nothing and worſe. A Perſon uſed to Affliction and Croſſes, can ſometimes be tempted to think, there is no Help for me; the Lord has forſaken me; he has caſt me aſide as a Dog; my God has forgotten me: For their Sakes therefore he ſaith, in the Prophet *Iſaiah*, "A Woman can forget her ſucking Child, but I can never forget thee;" as if he would ſay, However ſmall and mean thou art in thine own Eyes, however deſpicable and invaluable in the Eyes of others, thou art dear to me; I have eſteemed thee precious; I have graven thee on the Palms of my Hands.

We were all to him like Graſhoppers, and as a Drop of the Bucket, or as a little Grain of Duſt on the Ballance compared with his heavenly Worlds and their Hoſts; but yet he would not ſee us periſh as a Thing of Nought, but [from] the Beginning his eternal Mercies moved him to be our Saviour, and to help a People who had no other Friend, and who could not help themſelves. He ſaw us, as it is ſaid in *Ezekiel*, "in our Blood," i. e. in our Sin and Ruin, when no Eye pitied us, nor

nor could do any Thing to waſh us or cover us; and he had Compaſſion on us, and though he knew he could have made a better World with a Word, and though he knew what a poor unthankful Race we ſhould prove; it did not ſhut up the Bowels of his everlaſting Love, but he would become our Saviour. Nor this alone, but if one only Soul had ſinned, the Leaſt and pooreſt that ever was, rather than that Soul ſhould have periſhed without any Means of Help, he would have as freely left his Throne, and ſuffered, as for all the whole Creation. Who can read the Goſpel and not ſee that this is his very Heart? If a *Magdalene* came weeping behind him, he was overcome, and muſt pardon her. When a dying Rebel after all his Blaſphemy, and hardened Behaviour, began to relent and beg to be remembered in his Interceſſion, his Heart yerned, and he took him ſtrait into his Favour. The Tears and Diſtreſs of *Saul* made him haſten away *Ananias* to ſpeak comfortably to him. Even the outward Troubles and Sickneſſes which oppreſſed ſuch as he ſaw in the Streets, or who came to him, ſo touched him, that nothing is more frequently repeated all through the Goſpel than ſuch Expreſſions, "Jeſus had Compaſſion on him; I have Compaſſion on the Multitudes;" and he bids the *Dæmoniac* tell his Friends, how the Lord had had Compaſſion on him; and this Tenderneſs of Nature made him heal all, of whatever Diſeaſe they had, whether it was ſpiritual or bodily, ſo that the Report of his merciful Behaviour was blazed about, inſomuch that when any came to be helped, and could not get to him for the Preſs, or were blind, and could not find their Way to him, or were Lepers and were afraid to come near to him,

they

they cried out, " Jeſus have Mercy on us !" Lord have Mercy upon me ! Lord pity me ! Intimating by the very Manner of their ſpeaking, that they had been told of his tender Behaviour to others, and begged the ſame Grace ; as if they had ſaid, Lord Jeſus ! Thou haſt helped others in their deplorable Eſtate, O help us, O have Mercy on us too ! Indeed all our Lord's Words, his Actions, his Carriage proved him to be the ſame proclaimed of old to the Fathers, " The Lord gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger and of great Goodneſs ; him whoſe Compaſſions fail not, he whoſe Mercy endureth from one Generation to another.

Though he is and was a juſt God, yet he delights in Mercy, and is touched to the Heart with the Miſeries of his poor People. How far this has been viſible, we may ſee in his Behaviour at the Grave of *Lazarus*, when he ſaw the Grief of the two Siſters of the Deceaſed, and beheld one weeping at his right Hand, and the other at his left, his meek Heart melted, and Jeſus wept too. He conſidered their Diſtreſs, and remembered Sin had been the Cauſe of all this Trouble ; had there been no Sin, there could have been no Death, nor Sorrow, nor Sighing ; therefore his Friends and Enemies, his Angels and Apoſtles could ſee how God pitied his Children in their fallen State, nor did he ceaſe groaning in Spirit before all the *Jews*, till they obſerved it, and ſaid, " Behold how he loved him !" And when nothing could dry up the Siſters Tears whom he loved, but recalling of their Brother, he made uſe of his Almighty Divinity, and ſpoke him again into Life.

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But though this was a moſt ſpecial Mark and Proof of the Lord's great Tenderneſs and Pity, there is in the Word preceeding the Text, another edifying and ſingular Relation of Jeſus Chriſt's tender Mercy, which I ſhall this Day ſpeak of, and muſt pray all to hear with the utmoſt Attention.

As he was one Day entering into the City, called *Nain*, with many of his Diſciples and many other People, he met at the Gate of the City the Corpſe of a dead Man, whom they were carrying out to his Burial, and many of the People of the City attended the ſolemn Proceſſion. The Man was the only Son of his Mother, and ſhe was a Widow, and it appears by what our Saviour ſpoke to her, that ſhe followed her Son weeping and lamenting greatly. This Sight ſo affected the Redeemer, that it ſeemed hard to ſay who felt moſt, the childleſs Mother or the God who created both; he could not ſuffer to ſee how the Tears run down her aged Cheeks, nor could he bear to hear her Sobs and Sighs; as the Lord ſaw her, he had Compaſſion on her, and went up to her, and ſaid, "Weep not," and ſtopped the Bier, and called back the young Man and gave him alive to his elſe inconſolable Mother. This whole Account has ſomewhat extraordinary in it, ſo that I am obliged to expatiate a little on it, and call you to look on and conſider it. I have no doubt but this was one great End, if not the only one, the Lord Jeſus had in coming to *Nain*, namely to comfort this poor Widow. He knew when her Huſband was called from her, and knew ſhe had been a Woman of a ſorrowful Spirit, and met with many ſharp and

cutting Afflictions and Trials, but was comforted in her Child, who was in her Widowhood in the Stead of a Huſband to her, and who, perhaps, was not only her only Son, but the laſt Child ſhe had living, and as *Benjamin* was the Darling, and, as it were, the Life of good old *Jacob*, ſo was this Man the Life and Comfort of his Mother, and her Heart ſeemed wrapped up in him, ſo that when he was taken away, ſhe became deſolate indeed, and of all Women the moſt miſerable. All this Jeſus knew, and in the Multitude of his Mercies reſolved to comfort her, and at the ſame Time, let her know the Lord had had Compaſſion on her, that ſo ſhe might not only receive back her Son, but feel and know her Maker was her Huſband, who had ſeen her Affliction, and was come to deliver her; but he ſuffered it to go far before he interpoſed to relieve her. He often lets Things go to the fartheſt, and when to all Appearance there is no Remedy, he makes bare his Arm and ſtretches out his Hand to ſave, and this he does that we might know our Help ſtandeth in the Name of the Lord that made Heaven and Earth. Thus oftentimes it ſeemed as if the Children of *Iſrael* in their Battles would be totally defeated and overborne by the Enemy, but when they cried to him, he ſoon made all their Adverſaries know, that the God of *Jacob* was Almighty, and had as it were the Strength of an Unicorn. So when *Peter* ſeemed ready to ſink, and was juſt on the Brink of being drowned, Jeſus ſtretched out his Hand and ſaved him; and thus he does by many Hundreds and Thouſands in the Time of their Trouble, he lets the Souls come into Extremity, ſo that they can feel and know that no one leſs than God Almighty can help them, and then

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makes his Grace and Power known in helping them; and this he does for his own Name and Honour's ſake, that we might give him his due Praiſe, and not fancy we have helped ourſelves, or that our Caſe was ſuch that out of it Men or Angels could have redeemed us. No, all who are ſaved in Jeſus, have firſt felt and been convinced, by the Holy Ghoſt, that without him their Pain was perpetual and their Wounds incurable,

After this his wonted Manner, then he dealt with this Widow. It was the Cuſtom of the *Jews* to have their Burying-places without the Gates of their City; and no Sign of Help appeared, till the Woman was juſt come to the Place where ſhe was to take the long Farewel of her Child, her only Son.

I dare ſay, before Jeſus met her, had any looked on as ſhe paſſed the Streets of *Nain*, they would have ſeen her wringing her Hands, with her grey Hair hanging over her Face, while Floods of Tears flowed down from her ſwoln Eyes; I ſuppoſe many of the People, who followed the Corpſe with her, ſtrove to comfort her, but all was in vain. It was to her, as if the whole World was dead and loſt to her. Methinks I ſee her ſtriking upon her Breaſt with utmoſt Grief, and bemoaning her hard Fate; methinks I hear her ſay to thoſe that would have comforted her, O call my Name *Marah*, for God hath dealt bitterly by me. It has pleaſed him to take away my Huſband, and now, in my old Age, when my Son, my only Son ſhould have ſupported and been a Comfort to me, lo! he has cut him off and left me deſolate with-

out a Friend, or Huſband, or Child, to go down with my grey Hairs in Sorrow to my Grave! O my Son, would to God I had died for thee, my Son, my Son!

Jeſus felt her Pain and Anguiſh, and haſted to meet her. He might think, this will be my poor Mother's Caſe not many Days hence; *Joſeph* is gone, and when ſhe beholds me dying, a Sword will pierce through her Soul, and force her to cry out like this poor Widow, who is in bitterneſs for her only Child. Thus can he pity one who loſes his Friend, and that Widow who muſt follow her laſt Child to the Grave; thus he can pity a Child who loſes a dear Parent; and much more can he pity ſuch as feel the Loſs of his Preſence, and who mourn for him whom they have pierced, as one mourns for his Firſt-born.

I had ſaid that Jeſus felt her Sorrow ere ſhe appeared in Sight; but what his Heart endured, or how deeply he was touched on that Account, none knew till he drew nigh the City-Gate, and then all his Diſciples were Witneſſes how much it affected him, for, "when the Lord ſaw her, he had Compaſſion on her, and ſaid unto her, Weep not."

O methinks I ſee the dear Lord Jeſus with the Tears ready to burſt out of his own Eyes, going up to the Woman; methinks I ſee the Concern of his Heart in his meek Looks, and hear him ſaying, O don't weep, thy Cries cut my very Heart; I cannot bear thy Tears, I know thy forſaken State, I know thou art deſolate and haſt loſt thy only Son, but I will give him to thee again, only be comforted

ſorted and ceaſe thy Lamenting; thy God has Compaſſion on thee, he pities thee and loves thee: Weep not! but wipe away thy Tears, and lift up thy drooping Head; thy Son ſhall live again, I will raiſe him up, and thou ſhalt know that the Lord has ſeen thy Affliction, and will eaſe thee and comfort thee,

I doubt not but at firſt the Woman could not hope, but thought it far too good News to be true, till ſhe ſaw Jeſus ſtop the Bearers of the Corpſe, and he came and touched the Bier, (and they that bare him ſtood ſtill) and he ſaid, "Young Man, I ſay to thee, ariſe," and he that was dead ſat up, and began to ſpeak; and he delivered him to his Mother. In this Miracle the Godhead of Chriſt ſhone forth bright indeed, for when the Prophets did their Wonders, or performed any great Cure, it was done in the Name of their God, they generally called on the Lord, and let all ſee it was not by their own Power that the Sick were cured, or the Dead raiſed; thus the Apoſtles uſed the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and in his Name did all their Miracles, and ever preached it, "Be it known unto you all, that through Jeſus Chriſt's Name is this Man made whole;" even our Lord himſelf in doing many of his amazing Works, in his uſual Humiliation, prayed to his Father, and learned Obedience, as if he had been a Servant, and this was ſeen in a Meaſure at the Reſurrection of *Lazarus*, for he looked up to Heaven and beſought his Father to hear him, before he called the dead Man to Life: But in this Account, as the Lord and God of the Living and of the Dead, he demands the Prey out of the Mouth of the Lion, as

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it were, and Death knew who ſpake, when he ſaid, "Young Man, I ſay to thee, ariſe!" And Death delivered up his Captive at his Word. Thus ſhall it be in the laſt Day, no ſooner ſhall he, who is Lord of Death and Hell, command both to give up their Dead, but all that are in their Graves ſhall hear his Voice and come forth. This Act of our Saviour's, as well as the Manner in which he did it, like the raiſing of *Lazarus* in much the ſame Way, muſt then be our invincible Argument, that he is the Reſurrection and the Life, and that neither Death, nor the Grave, nor Hell, nor Satan, nor any ſpiritual Bondage, nor Sin, nor Darkneſs, nor Miſery, nor Fear, nor Pain, can confine a Soul a Moment longer, when he ſays, "Looſe him, and let him go." This muſt teach us in all Times of Trial to apply directly to him. Are we in Bondage through the Fear of Death, or through the Sin that moſt eaſily beſets us? He only can ſay, be thou looſed from thine Infirmity, and it ſhall be done. Are we drawing near the Time of our Change? He that taſted Death himſelf, and met it in its moſt frightful Dreſs, and who ſunk down into it, ſurrounded with all its Terrors, he can order it ſo that we ſhall not be holden of Death a Moment, nor ſo much as ſee or taſte of it, but have it ſo ſweetened and altered to us, that it ſhall be only like the open Door out of our Exile and Baniſhment into the Chamber of our Bridegroom and into our everlaſting Reſt.

Satan and Death would laugh to Scorn all our Courage, and mock all our Reſolution and Bravery, if Jeſus did not arm us with his Armour, and with divine Authority make his Voice heard,

I ſay unto thee, Death! And to thee, Hell! Hurt not mine Anointed, let my Servant go free.

And when the young Man was raiſed to Life, and ſat up in his Coffin, he began to ſpeak, and his Mother began to praiſe the Lord! He had turned all her Mourning away in a Moment, and inſtead of the Voice of Weeping and Lamentation, there was heard nothing but the Voice of Thankſgiving and Rejoicing. I don't doubt but the Holy Spirit, who had made her Sighs ſo prevalent, before now made her ſee who Jeſus was; all glorified God, and many of them that were Witneſſes of this charitable and merciful Miracle, thought, a great Prophet is riſen among us; but it ſeems as if more was meant by that remarkable Expreſſion uſed by ſome, "God has viſited his People." Who knows but this Tenderneſs of our Saviour, was the Means of ſaving eternally the Mother, the Son, and many of thoſe who were at this happy Opportunity; for I cannot help believing that our Saviour, who ſo pitied Perſons in Sickneſs, in Bonds, in Pain, in Sorrow, which were only temporal Trials and Burdens, much more pitied their ſpiritual Eſtate, and often made theſe the Means of bringing them to him, and humbling their Souls at his Feet, that he might make them know who he was, and that he might give them eternal Salvation.

All the many Examples and Proofs of his Love to the Children of Men, are therefore noted and handed down to us, that his Long-ſuffering might lead unthinking and careleſs Mortals to Repentance, and comfort ſuch as are in Diſtreſs, and encourage

courage them, with all their Afflictions and Miſeries, to go to Jeſus, who was and is acquainted with Grief, and whoſe Delight and Pleaſure is to deliver ſuch as are ready to periſh. O let it have this Effect upon us in our Trials. Let us remember, the Lord has Compaſſion on us, and he [who] would go to *Nain* to comfort a poor deſolate Widow once in the Days of his Fleſh, is the ſame now, and will ſurely comfort us. All the Afflictions, Misfortunes, or grievous Things which befal us in this World, are known fully to him, and when they have ſerved the End for which they were ſent or ſuffered, he delivers us out of them. Be not any of you therefore caſt down and dejected too much, when your deareſt Relations are called away, or when all Things ſeem to make againſt us; don't raſhly conclude the Lord deals hardly with you, or that he reſolves to make all your Days bitter through afflicting Viſitations, Croſſes, or Troubles, but learn, that your good Things are in a better World, and rejoice, that though Heavineſs may endure for a Night, Joy ſhall come in the Morning. Let your Diſappointments below, wean you from having any Confidence in Fleſh and Blood, or in any Thing earthly, for all are tranſitory, all periſh, and the moſt promiſing Bleſſings in the World, without Jeſus, are ſplendid Lies and painted Bubbles. Live you as Men who have built your Houſe upon a Rock, which no Wind, or Storm, or Flood can move, undermine or ſhake. Since Jeſus the Lord has Compaſſion on you, why need you be uneaſy if you are uſed unkindly or cruelly in the World; and ſince he will be better to you than Father or Mother, or (as *Elkanah* told his Wife) than

than ten Sons, do not be diſmayed, ſhould all you have be taken away. The Lord is the ſame, and when the Heavens and Earth are changed, and when Time is no longer, he will be your everlaſting God, and your Portion for ever.

But there are ſome who grieve and will not be comforted, and who are not concerned after Loſſes, nor mourn becauſe of any outward Want or Trouble, nor becauſe their Friends, Huſbands, Wives, or Kindred, or only Children are dead, but becauſe they have a Heart dead to God, and who feel themſelves without true Life in Jeſus. This is a State common to all who are awakened, and who feel the Plague of their own Hearts. In this Condition a Soul can ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, "My Sore ran in the Night Seaſon, my Soul refuſed Comfort." Such are reſtleſs indeed, ſuch never can reſt till the Lamb of God has given them a Reſt for their Souls; they mourn, and their Mourning is for him whom they have pierced, and juſt as a Parent laments for his Firſt-born, or like as the Widow of *Nain* mourned for her only Son, ſo they mourn and languiſh for Redemption, and Day and Night cry out for God their Saviour; and are there any here in this Caſe? Let ſuch know, that his Heart, who was ſo affected and touched with the Woman's Cries and Tears, will in like Manner meet them and comfort them. Thus he overtook the two Brethren who were walking ſad to *Emaus*. He comforted them, and did not leave them till all their Sorrow was turned into Joy. Thus he met *Magdalene* in the Garden, when he aſked her, "Woman, why weepeſt thou?" She had ſcarce Time to tell him, ſhe mourned her abſent Lord, but Jeſus

called her by her Name, and at once made her heavy Heart leap for Joy and Gladneſs. The Women who went weeping to the Sepulchre, were told by the Angels not to fear; for, ſaid they, Ye ſeek Jeſus that was crucified! they knew, all who looked with Tears for the Lamb that was ſlain, ſhould ſurely find him. Let me in like Manner then comfort you; go on weeping after him, let not your Heart or Eyes reſt, till the Moment comes when Jeſus ſhall reveal his Love to you, and bring the Times of refreſhing from the Preſence of the Lord. While you are waiting upon him, let his compaſſionate Behaviour to the Woman in the Text encourage you, let his Promiſe be a Staff, as it were, to you, and in all your Deadneſs of Heart, in all Backwardneſs to believe, Heavineſs of Spirit, or Deſertion, ſit low at his Feet as Objects of Pity and Compaſſion, till he ſay to each of you, as he did to the Widow's Son, "Young Man, Young Woman, I ſay to thee, ariſe." At his Word all your Sorrow and Sighing ſhall flee away, and you ſhall riſe up to Life eternal, you ſhall begin to ſpeak and ſhew forth his Praiſes, and tell to others what the Lord has done for you, and how the Lord, your own Lord and God, your own God has had Compaſſion on you. May he do this for you all, to the Glory of his great Name whoſe redeemed People and Inheritance you all are. Amen.

FINIS.

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A PRAYER.

O Thou merciful and compaſſionate High Prieſt, who has experienced and known all the Infirmities and Sickneſſes of thy People, and who has Pity on the Ignorant, and ſuch as are out of the Way; and art ready to ſave all who are friendleſs and ready to periſh; look upon me, behold a poor Sinner at thy Feet, who cannot do without thee. I am undone; I am uneaſy and diſſatisfied; my Fleſh and my Heart trembles becauſe of my Sin, and I cannot be comforted: I cannot reſt, nor ſleep, nor wake, nor live, nor die in Peace, till thou aſſureſt me that thou haſt forgiven me. Say to me, as to the Widow of *Nain*, "Weep not." Still the Tempeſt in my Breaſt, and grant me that Peace in thee, which the World cannot give. See the reſtleſs Condition of my Heart, and for thy tender Mercy's Sake, grant me ſuch a Confidence in thee, that I may truſt and not be afraid. I know I have ſinned againſt thee, but O have Compaſſion on me. I am nothing but Sin, and unworthy and worthleſs, and neither can any one elſe help me, nor can I help myſelf: Have Mercy on me. All my Deſire and wiſh is to feel and know thou pitieſt me, and wilt ſave me. I am weary with ſinning; I am ſorry that I have lived ſo long diſobedient; I repent, (O my God! my God, thou knoweſt my inmoſt Heart, thou knoweſt I repent) and beg for Pardon. Think upon *Gethſemane*, think upon thy Diſtreſs and Agony, think upon thy Uneaſineſs and Frights in the Wilderneſs, remember thy Sorrows on

Mount Calvary, remember the Wormwood and the Gall, and for thy Sufferings Sake, for thy bitter Torments Sake, and for the Sake of thy Name, thy Love, thy Death, thy Wounds, and Miſeries, ſave and comfort me. Teach me to wait upon thee without Diſtraction, to be faithful and true; cauſe me to cleave to thee and never go away; and make it ſo clear to me that I am thy Beloved, and thou mine, that all Afflictions and Trials may be light, and eaſiy borne with a Patience becoming a Soul who is called by thy Name. Thou who art eaſy to be intreated, and who canſt not ſend Souls empty away, fulfil my Deſire, that I may love thee, and live to thy Praiſe, and be a Witneſs that thou haſt viſited thy People, and haſt power on Earth to forgive Sins; yea do this for me, that I may glorify thy dear and holy Name for ever! Amen.

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